RADIO STATION W D U K - The One Watt Wonder - the Voice of House J

Radio Station WDUK commenced operations at 11:36am EST Friday morning, February 27,1953. Our transmitter and microphone arrived in 216-J at 11:30, and after six minutes, WDUK was on the air with music --our mainstay-- on 1200 kilocycles. The antenna set-up in use is the highest ever used by the station, and we had no idea that it could be heard half-way to Chapel Hill, at 5 points, at Edgemont Community Center, and at the Saddle Club--all reporting reception (on auto radios). We tested the full 5-watt transmitter Friday night, and were amazed at the effective signal being put out; at the time, we were operating on 1160 kc/s clear channel, the only other station on that channel being KSL-50,000 watts - Salt Lake City, Utah. We were proud that our signal could be heard in every dormitory on West Campus; also, in the Union Building, half way to the hospital, and ironically, in the WDBS studios. This gave us no inkling of how far the signal was going out, though. Saturday afternoon the distance tales began coming in. Also, some KA's came up and requested a number. Saturday night we were just signing off with full power at 8:00 when Bill Wortman came and told us that his father was head of the Communications Dept. of N.C., and that two FCC trucks were hunting down our signal. Needless to say, this hastened our signoff. Since that time, we have not operated at full power more than 5 minutes; Sunday afternoon we were testing the 1-watt oscillator as to its effective coverage, and my roommate flipped the switch back and forth from 1-to-5 watts, thus good comparison. At the bus stop, and up as far as the YMCA and house P, there would be no trace of any signal whatsoever at 1 watt; at 5 watts, the signal would boom in.

WDUK is a non-commercial station, boasting plenty of music all the time; we could transmit 60 hours without repeating a record. We are one of few stations employing automatically records of all speeds-- 33 1/3, 45, and 78rpm. Our purpose is not to compete or take away listeners from other stations. Frankly, I never listen to the radio when I'm studying (and I do occasionally)because of the frequent announcements and commercials. WDUK offers a minimum in those.With 1 watt --thereby covering at night house J and the two adjacent houses-- we certainly do no command a majority of the student body. Our transmitter at 1 watt power is fully sanctioned by the Federal Communications Commission in Washington,D.C.; it consists of a Budd 1-watt oscillator; these formerly were used in phonographs with no loudspeakers of their own. It has very limited coverage, and can be heard no more than 75-100 feet at the most. We have found that most of the people who showed interest in WDUK do not usually listen to WDBS or any other station at night, and that WDUK is a new, possibly favorable listening habit. WDUK's plan was to bring the "Best to West" musically.

Friday night we will admit that things happened contrary to our wishes. With 15 people in our room, and with them considerable pressure, we had little choice as to whether to play the party records or not; it is not the policy of the station to do such. We signed-off at 11:15, and immediately thereupon were approached (reproached) by the assistant housemaster of House I, Bob Spivey,who apparently has more jurisdiction over house J than I thought. After 10 minutes I knew nothing more than when he entered, except that trouble was on the way. I was aware from the beginning that there would be FCC trouble if it put out too much of a signal, but I had no expectation of University red tape. Spivey went up to see Bill Werber and Nolan Rogers, both of whom had visited and enjoyed the station the same night. Afterwards I saw the former as to the University's viewpoint on such an operation. He said he'd see Dean Cox. Saturday morning we were informed that Dean McNurlen had OKed the station. Tuesday I received a card from Dean Cox, and visited the same at 11:30am. He took down some facts about the station. Now the fact that I was told Saturday night that two FCC trucks were tuning me in, and that one friend saw an FCC truck roaming around the campus Friday night after signoff time, and that two other friends saw two FCC trucks parked in front of the chapel Monday morning hadn't worried me; if they couldn't catch this station, I would have been worried. However,

Dean Cox wouldn't say whether the FCC had come to visit him about WDUK or not.

As to the technical viewpoint, WDUK was as eager as the FCC in the way of not causing interference; however, we were looking for channels which wouldn't cause interference to us. So we chose two frequencies: 1200 kc/s day, and 1160 kc/s after 8:00pm (February) or 8:30pm(March) at night. Burlington, N.C. has a station on 1150kc/s, WFNS, 1000 watts, which would cause due interference to us if we were on 1160 during the day; WOAI, San Antonio, Texas, 50000 watts clear channel, would interfere with us if we remained on 1200kc/s during the night. As WFNS Burlington doesn't operate at night, we chose 1200 for day use, and 1160 for night use after 8:30pm. WJJD Chicago, Ill., also 50000 watts, has an SSA (special service authorization) to operate on the clear channel of KSL Salt Lake City up to a specified time each month; during March, it operates up until 8:30pm EST nightly. After it signs off, there is no trace of KSL, naturally, and only occasional interference (QRM) from a Cuban station (the call letter slip me at present). So it is a good channel for us. However, our inadequate equipment prevents us from remaining exactly on 1160 at night (or 1200 during day), as we only have a variable crystal control for the frequency, i.e., it is very adjustable, and very sensitive to the weather. For instance, when we first tune it in, say on 1200, it stays there for a minute or two; immediately, the heat from the tube will change it some; even after the whole oscillator is at maximum heat, the weather changes it. The signal was drifting considerably the other night until we closed the window, thereby stopping the cold air from entering. However, we were very discerned to learn that our station would be banned--even with LEGAL ONE WATT POWER--after buying $85 worth of equipment on Friday afternoon (microphone and amplifier).

WDUK hopes to remain on the air. We will again emphasize that WDUK is not existent either just for competition or as revenge (because I have 3 times tried out for WDBS, all apparently unsuccessfully).

However, I have just talked to Dean Cox again, who has informed me that the Maintenance Dep't. is against it, and that he himself is against it. He said he'd discuss it with the administration staff, and that the answer would probably remain the same. He said that nothing should stand in the way of the growth of the campus station; and that the University has control over WDBS, whereas it would have no control over WDUK and over what was broadcast.

Our argument is this: is a one watt transmitter capable of competing with an 80-watt carrier current station? Our purpose is not competition. WDUK is thoroughly familiar with the moral codes of broadcasting, and even has a schedule, even though the schedule can not always be followed. We have no commercials, party records or vulgarity. That's about it.

"Music all day from the voice of house J, the one-watt wonder, WDUK" is now a saying of the past....

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